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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1626
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS PHNOM PENH 000071

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, G/TIP

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KTIP](#) [KJUS](#) [CB](#)
SUBJECT: CAMBODIAN AUTHORITIES BREAK UP TRAFFICKING RING;
ARREST TWO LOCALS

REF: A. 09 PHNOM PENH 933
[1](#)B. 09 PHNOM PENH 707

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: An official from the Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection (AHTJP) Police Unit confirmed the arrest of two Cambodians involved in a virginity sale and child trafficking business in Phnom Penh and Kandal Province. The two traffickers, and an American perpetrator arrested subsequently, are all being held in pre-trial detention. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) On January 22, police from the AHTJP unit arrested 35-year-old Mey Sovann and 47-year-old Sek Vy in connection with a pedophilia and trafficking ring. According to police, the two traffickers allegedly collaborated in selling the virginity of underage girls over the Internet. After arranging details over the Internet, taxi-driver Mey would meet arriving potential perpetrators at the airport and transport them the guesthouse owned by Sek in Kandal Province, where the criminal acts took place. The two allegedly sold the virginity of multiple underage girls for approximately \$3,000 USD per night. While Mey and Sek are currently charged on three separate counts involving three 16-year-old girls, Police Major General Bith Kimhong, Director of the AHTJP Unit, told Poloff on January 25 that police are searching for more victims, some of whom may be as young as 12 years old.

[1](#)3. (SBU) On January 25, the Phnom Penh Municipal Court questioned Mey and Sek and officially charged both with violations of Article 28, "Procurement With Regard to Child Prostitution" and Article 35, "Soliciting for Child Prostitution" under Cambodia's 2008 Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation. The procurement charge carries a potential sentence of 7-15 years because the victims are under the age of 18. The soliciting charge, which has not been used since the promulgation of the anti-TIP law in February 2008, criminalizes the advertisement of child prostitution or solicitation of another person to participate in child prostitution, and carries a potential 5-10 year prison penalty when the offense is committed as a business. The questioning of the two is the start of the investigative phase of the judicial process; when the investigating judge concludes the investigation, he will return the case to the prosecutor for evaluation. Thereafter, the prosecutor will determine whether to send the case back for further investigation or forward to the presiding judge for trial. Under Cambodian law, there is no time limit set on the investigative phase. According to police, the two have confessed to the crimes.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The arrests are the result of a nearly six-month investigation by AHTJP police, in conjunction with the International Technical Cooperation Delegation of the French police.

15. (SBU) Police also arrested an American man, who the court charged under Article 34, "Purchase of Child Prostitution" and Article 41, "Child Pornography." The man was reportedly arrested after the immediate facts leading to the arrest of Mey and Sek showed the American was the perpetrator in the case involving the three 16-year-old girls. The man allegedly paid \$7,800 USD to have the three underage girls spend eight days with him. The man has also allegedly confessed to the crimes.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: The arrest of the two purported traffickers is another step forward for Cambodian police in their efforts to improve investigations and arrests of trafficking perpetrators. Authorities in the past would have concentrated solely on the foreign perpetrator while overlooking the local element in the case. These arrests, following on the heels of the conviction of trafficker Ho Ngoy (Ref A), demonstrate that the message emphasized by Ambassador CdeBaca during his September visit is being taken seriously (Ref B). The length of the investigation, which concluded in an arrest, also shows a growing sophistication on the part of the AHTJP police unit. END COMMENT
RODLEY